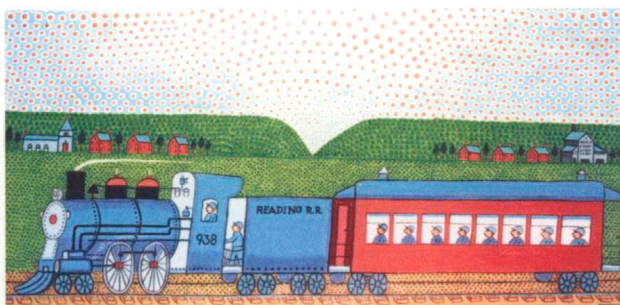


Walsh Library Gallery
presents

Jack Savitsky

A Retrospective of a 20th Century Folk Artist



September 5 - October 25, 2002

Reception Thursday, September 19th 5-8 p.m.

Gallery talk at 6:30 p.m.

**“Jack Savitsky: an American Folk Artist”
by the artist’s son, Jack P. Savitt**

Curated by James C. Lansing

Sponsored by

**the Graduate Program in Museum Professions,
Department of Art and Music, in association with
the American Folk Art Museum, New York City**

Walsh Library Gallery
400 South Orange Ave.
South Orange, NJ 07079

Mon. - Fri. 10:30 am-4:30 pm
(973) 275-2033
<http://library.shu.edu/gallery>

Jack Savitsky (1910-1991)

Jack Savitsky's paintings and drawings document the life of the working man in America. Through the prism of his close to forty year personal experience as a Pennsylvania coal miner, he focused on these unheralded heroes who performed backbreaking, often dangerous daily chores that helped build our country's strong industrial force. Savitsky painted the surrounding landscape and mining towns, its churches, schools, and identical rows of houses in which the miners lived, and the miners themselves, sometimes adding their wives, children and pets. He painted miners at work-the coal trains, mine shafts, breaking coal, drilling the coal, and he also depicted miners at leisure celebrating a July Fourth parade. Patriotism and religion, strong impulses in American folk art inspired many Savitsky subjects. Along with patriotic themes, biblical subjects included, *The Crucifixion*, *Adam and Eve*, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, *Noah's Ark*, and *The Last Supper*. Historical events and personages as well as mythology also interested the artist.

Sterling Strauser, an important figure in artist and collector circles, and friend, patron and advocate thought of Savitsky as an authentic folk painter. He perceived that Savitsky worked within a folk tradition similar to that of Yugoslavian, Russian and Czechoslovakian folk artists in that he used the "same treatment of line and the same repetition." Working in a variety of media, including pen and ink, charcoal, colored pencil, crayon, pastel, watercolor and oil on many different surfaces, paper, cardboard, Masonite, wood and canvas, Savitsky created sensitive renderings free of superfluity. These deceptively simple artworks were skillfully and confidently executed with an economy of line and narrow range of pure unmixed colors.

Unlike many self taught artists who were frozen in one expressive style, Savitsky's cartoon-like pictures consciously evolved from earlier more naturalistic expression. *Hunting the Wood Duck* (1925) and *The Hunter* (1925) exemplify efforts to use light, shadow, and perspective to create the illusion of three dimensional forms and space. The artist abandoned attempts at realism in favor of flattened perspective, a shallow picture plane, and generalized lighting to highlight every detail equally. Savitsky's art looks fresh in our postmodern era and resonates with the graphic language several academically trained artists have adopted to express their views of contemporary American society and culture. How ironic it is that Savitsky's use of the cartoon device depicted an era that was rapidly ending.

Lee Kogan

Director Folk Art Institute

Curator of Special Projects for the Contemporary Center

American Folk Art Museum

September 2002



Washington Crossing the Delaware 1976

Works on Exhibit

WATERFRONT FARM HOUSE
1965, Oil on masonite, 42.5" x 30"
Collection of John Doyle

DELAWARE WATER GAP WITH CANOE
Undated, Oil on masonite, 15" x 21"
Collection of John Doyle

HOME ON COUNTRY ROAD
Undated, Oil on board, 7.5" x 15"
Collection of John Doyle

VIEW OF JIM THORPE
Undated, Oil on board, 21.5" x 18"
Collection of John Doyle

WINTER IN NEW ENGLAND
1965, Oil on masonite, 33" x 28"
Collection of John Doyle

LADY GODIVA
1964, Oil on masonite, 21.5" x 35.25"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

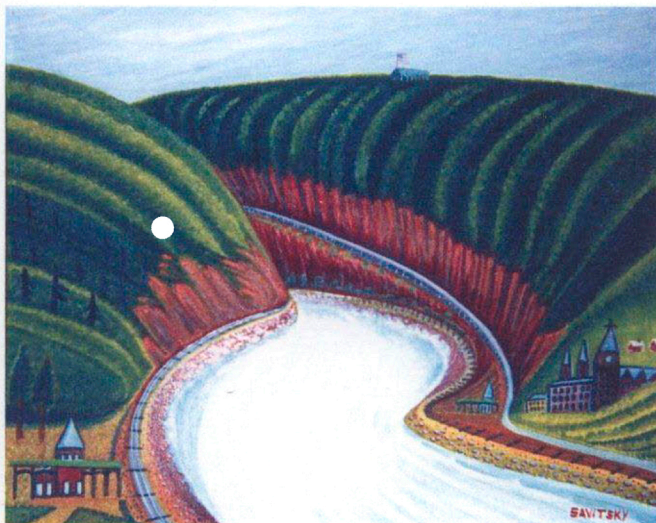
VILLAGE OF ECKLEY, PENNSYLVANIA
1970, Oil on masonite, 18" x 24"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

MINERS TRAIN
1973, Oil on masonite, 29" x 43"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE READING COAL MINER'S TRAIN
1982, Oil on masonite, 24" x 48"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE
1976, Oil on masonite, 24" x 48"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE PARADE
1976, Oil on masonite, 24" x 36",
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt



View of Jim Thorpe undated

MUSTANGS

1975, Oil on masonite, 18" x 24"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

COAL MINER CRUCIFIED

1978, Oil on canvas board, 24" X 18"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

BREAKER BOYS

1981, Oil on masonite, 24" x 36"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

A DAY IN THE COAL MINES

1977, Oil on masonite, 16" x 20"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

**COAL MINER TESTING AT 2000
FEET BELOW**

1958, Oil on cloth, 20.5" x 31"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

OLD COMPANY LEHIGH

1958, Oil on masonite, 20.5" x 31"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

PEACE

1981, Oil on wood panel, 20" x 24"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

SCHOOL DAYS, 1916

1960, Oil on board, 22" x 18"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

**THE COAL MINER JACK SAVIT-
SKY-FROM THE COAL MINES TO
NEW YORK CITY**

1977, Oil on masonite, 28" x 48"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

**BLUE MOUNTAIN FARM, CARBON
COUNTY**

1960, Oil on masonite, 22" x 21"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE MINERS TRAIN

1970, Oil on masonite, 18" x 24"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

ADAM AND EVA (sic)

1963, Oil on board, 20" x 20"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE STORM

1965, Oil on drywall, 14" x 17"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE HUNTER

1925, Oil on drywall, 35.75" x 51.5"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

BELTZVILLE, CARBON COUNTY

1960, Oil on wallboard, 21" x 22"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

OLD STONE BRIDGE

1960, Oil on wallboard, 20" x 24"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

HUNTING THE WOOD DUCK

1925, Oil on wallboard, 39.5" X 29.75"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

DRILLING THE COAL

1966, Oil on masonite, 24" x 48"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE STRIKE

1965, Pen and pencil on paper, 25"x18.5"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

EAGLE

1973, Oil on board, 24" x 28"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE LAST SUPPER

1974, Oil on canvas, 20" x 24"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE ROARING TWENTIES

1976, Oil on panel board, 33" x 22"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

**PEACE...AND THE CHILD SHALL
LEAD THEM**

1975, Oil on board, 23" x 43"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE WEDDING

1983, Oil on masonite, 24" x 48"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

A BAD DREAM

1976, Oil on masonite, 20" x 24"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE COAL MINER'S SUPPER

1975, Oil on board, 31" x 49"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE SUNKIST

c.1960's, Oil on plywood, 46.5" x 32.5"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

MEDUSA

1963, Oil on masonite, 36" x 24"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

STARRY NIGHT

1983, Oil on board, 48" x 24"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

MY LIFE

1970, Oil on board, 22.5" x 18.5"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

**COAL MINERS WAITING FOR A
RIDE UP**

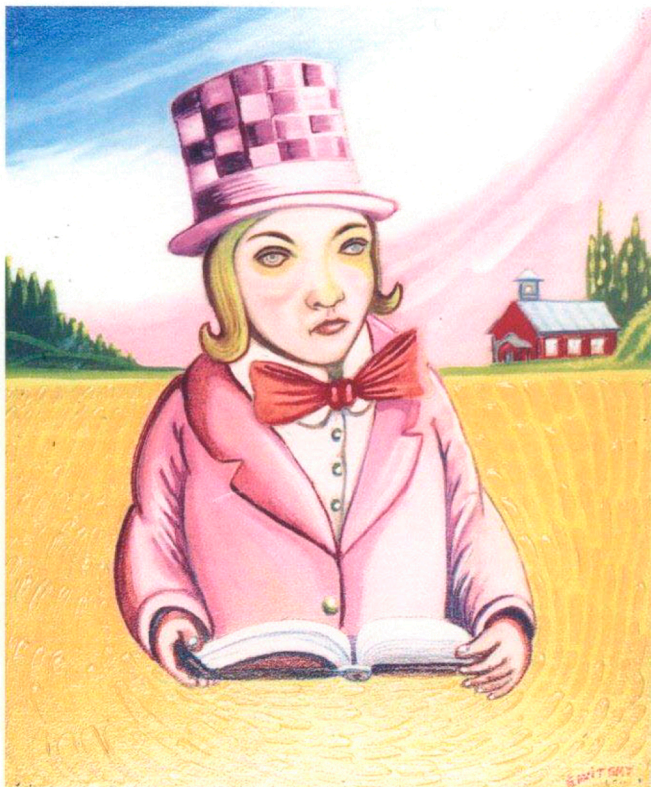
1979, Oil on board, 24" x 48"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

MOTHER AND CHILD

1979, Oil on masonite, 37" x 25"

Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt



School Days 1916 1960

MY WORKING CLOTHES

1974, Pen and pencil on paper, 14" x 11"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

SILVER CREEK ROAD

1976, Oil on board, 32" x 32"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE PIETA

1977, Oil on board, 22" x 27"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE THREE MUSKATEERS

1977, Oil on board, 18" x 12"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE CHAIN GANG

1983, Oil on masonite, 15.75" x 42.5"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE SHEPHERD

1979, Oil on canvas, 12" x 16"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE WAKE

1977, Oil on board, 18" x 12"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH

1964, Watercolor on canvas, 18" x 24"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

BRINGING FATHER'S LUNCH

1980, Oil on masonite, 28" x 48"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

COAL PICKERS

1962, Oil on board, 14" x 48"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

A DAY IN THE COAL MINES

1962, Oil on masonite, 10" x 60"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

**SALEM HILL COAL COMPANY'S
MINE SHAFT WITH COAL MINERS**

1962, Oil on board, 14" x 48"
Collection of Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

THE CRUCIFIXION

1974, Oil on board, 18" x 14"
Generously donated to the University by
Jack and Mary Lou Savitt

front cover:
The Reading Coal Miner's Train 1982



The Wedding 1983

Acknowledgements

Walsh Library Gallery is very proud to present this retrospective exhibition of work by Jack Savitsky (1925-1983). Many people helped to make this exhibit possible. Grateful thanks to Jack and Mary Lou Savitt and to John Doyle-the artist's son and grandson- for generously loaning these works to Seton Hall University. Thank you to James Lansing, curator and student in the Graduate Program in Museum Professions at Seton Hall University, for sharing his passion for Savitsky's work and organizing this exhibition.

The exhibit is sponsored by the Graduate Program in Museum Professions, Department of Art and Music, in association with the American Folk Art Museum in New York City. Special thanks to Gerard Wertkin and Lee Kogan of the American Folk Art Museum, and to Barbara Cate, Director of the Graduate Program in Museum Professions and Trustee of the American Folk Art Museum for their support and contributions.

Walsh Library Gallery is part of the University Library, Dr. Arthur Hafner, Dean and Professor. We thank him and the Library faculty for their continued support, especially Dr. Xueming Bao, University Library Webmaster and the staff of the Special Collections Center - Alan Delozier, Kathleen Dodds, and Justin Myzie. Special thanks to the many members of the University community who have contributed to the success of this exhibition: Frank Fleischman, Public Relations; Eva Gale, and the members of TLTC; and Barbara Dente, Gallery Assistant.

Savitsky's images are a snapshot out of the album of America's past. In his art the artist chronicles his lifelong career working in the coal mines of northeastern Pennsylvania and through it we get a personal glimpse of the people, experience the work and become part of the community. 'Coal Miner Jack' as he was known, captures that page in our history and celebrates it. The bulk of his paintings were done after the mine closed (1959-1981) and as he began to suffer from the work related illnesses of black lung and emphysema. Through these canvases we see what Savitsky saw from the inside as a participant. The bright colors that immediately draw and engage the viewer are in direct contrast to the black darkness of the mines that was his constant companion for so many years. Using canvas and masonite he broadly strokes the memories of his coal mining life in oils, acrylics, watercolor and pencil. Savitsky celebrates the dignity of work and working class people with masterful simplicity, honesty and a reverence for the community he was a part of. We thank him for sharing his vision with us.

Jo Ann Cotz, Gallery Director